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John Pixley Clement: Personal Impressions of the Great War (1914–1919)



VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

John Clement was an artillery officer in France in 1918.

Foreword

by Kendall Wild

John Pixley Clement (1893-1968) of Rutland was a man of many talents and many accomplishments. He was also born into a remarkable network of prominent Rutland families. Percival W. Clement, business leader who was a Rutland mayor and later governor of Vermont, was his great-uncle. John Clement's father, Henry Clement, had various local business interests including helping to finance the start of the Rutland Fire Clay Company. John Clement was related to the Dorr and Ripley families, who have left their names on Rutland geography. Julia C.R. Dorr, well-known in Vermont literary circles at the turn of the century, he called "Aunt Julia". There were perhaps a dozen Clements, Dorrs and Ripleys who were about of an age with John Clement, and they made for lively gatherings, since most of them grew up in Rutland.

John Clement graduated from Rutland High school, Phillips Exeter Academy and Yale, in the class of 1915. He became an Army officer in the artillery when the U.S. entered the war in 1917, and was entrained for the front in France when the Armistice was announced.

He stayed in France for most of the year after the war's end, studied at the Sorbonne, was in Paris when the Treaty of Versailles was signed in the summer of 1919, and returned to Rutland later that year.

After a time he became a partner in a bookstore in Cambridge, Mass., where he made the acquaintance of many scholars known at the time, including Roscoe Pound of Harvard Law School, Felix Frankfurter, later a U.S. Supreme Court Justice, and George Lyman Kittredge, Shakespearian expert. At Yale he had been in classes with Archibald MacLeish, a poet who later became Librarian of Congress and Assistant Secretary of State.

In the early 1930's, when the move to repeal Prohibition was gaining strength, Clement was in Montpelier, helping to spearhead the repeal process in Vermont. He served on the board which subsequently formed the Vermont Liquor Control Board.

Clement was known to those working at the State House in Montpelier as a bon vivant whose specialty was the creation of elaborate salads. For years he would also produce at parties a concoction he called Artillery Punch. In addition to the usual ingredients—fruit juice and liquor among them—he included something of his own devising which he revealed to friends as nothing more exotic than tea.

Always interested in historical matters, Clement served as president of the Vermont Historical Society from 1959 to 1965.

After the death of his parents, when leaner times came, Clement became a copy-desk editor at the Rutland Herald. But, the big family house at Field Avenue and Grove Street, across from the Rutland Country Club, was often open to the late-night partying of post-press-time personnel that he enjoyed. In summer hot weather the gatherings often were at a lawn he maintained on East Creek at the north end of his property, for swimming in a power company facility known as Patch's Pond.

These activities continued until Clement's death as the result of an automobile accident. In the Herald newsroom he was a great store of information, about Rutland events and personalities of the past, and about Vermont history. But he was also an expert on languages and grammar, and could quote from memory (in



John Clement's house at the corner of Grove Street and Field Avenue, across from the Rutland Country Club, was the scene of many gatherings that illustrated John's wide range of acquaintances. In this 1959 photo, John Clement is standing at the far right, typically holding his favorite pipe. The picture at the top left, partially shown behind the seated persons, is a painting which Clement executed while he was in Paris after the end of World War I.

Greek) the opening lines of Homer's "Iliad." In the early 1960's a friend took him to a Harvard-Yale game in Cambridge and after the game (which Harvard won) they roamed his old bookstore haunts and other Cambridge sites that he had known 40 years before.

Then he suggested a trip into Boston and an eatery well known in Boston called Locke-Ober's. The tables were crowded, but with great aplomb, Clement took his seat on a stool at the marble-topped lunch counter and said: "I'll order, if you don't mind. We'll have a half-dozen oysters on the half-shell and a Chateau-briand for two, medium rare." After the meal he had a long chat with one of the restaurant's waiters, about mutual acquaintances who were long gone.

When he was in Paris in 1919, after his Army service was over, Clement began to write down all that he had experienced since the beginning of the war in 1914. The account takes up a good share of three notebooks. Though begun in Paris, it was continued while he was waiting at Brest for a steamer to take him home, and continued after his arrival back in Rutland. He concluded it in 1924 at the bookstore in Cambridge.

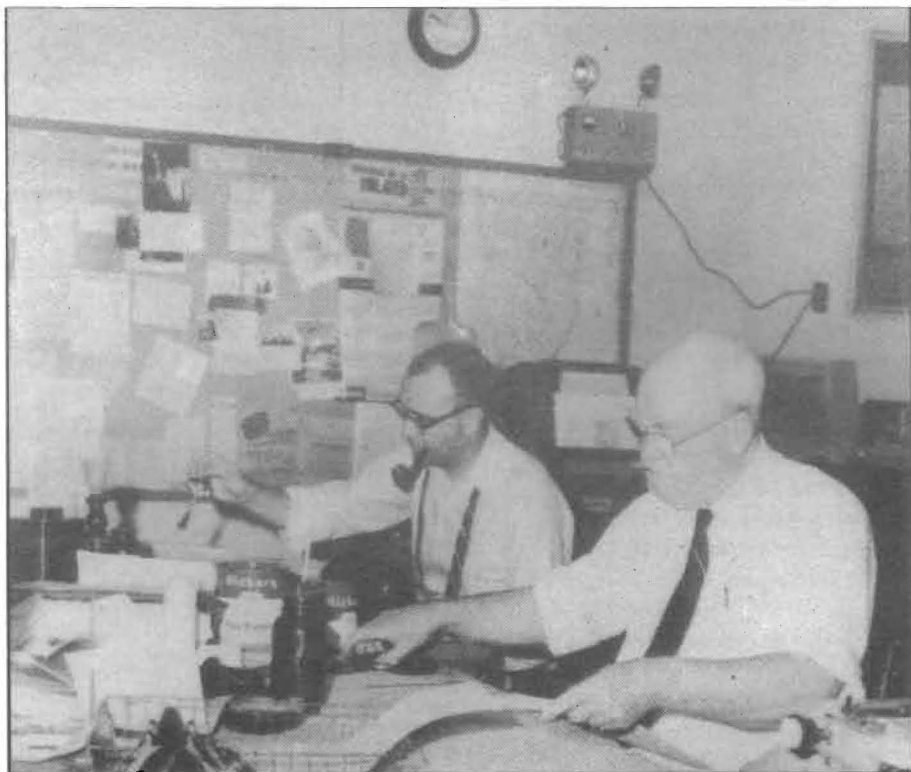
Most of the friends of John Clement's later years were unaware of the existence of the notebooks. After his death they were acquired by the late Frederic P. Elwert of Rutland, long active in the Rutland Historical Society. The manuscripts were made available to the Society by Mr. Elwert's wife, Eleanor, who has also been very active in the Historical Society.

The notebooks do not constitute a diary or journal as such. But all his life Clement was noted for total recall of events long past, and the notebooks are a recollection in vivid detail of events he experienced in what he called the "Great War".

In the clear handwriting that was one of his hallmarks, Clement entitled it "Looking Backward, 1914-1919." His foreword was also a typical John Clement statement.

About The Editor

Kendall Wild is the retired editor of the Rutland Herald. He made John Clement's acquaintance in the 1950's and was managing editor of the Herald's news operations when Clement joined the news staff as a copy editor. He resides in Rutland.



RUTLAND HERALD

Kendall Wild (l) and John Clement (r) worked for years on the copy desk.

Looking Backward

1914-1919

by John Pixley Clement
edited by Kendall Wild

"This is not a history of the war. It is more nearly a history of myself and my ideas, my actions and my wanderings and experiences during the course of the war. It is entirely egotistical and sometimes exceedingly personal, written by myself and for myself, entirely from recollection, and without reference to authoritative sources as to dates and facts. You—whoever you are—are not asked to read a single line."

The opening pages of the notebook are dated "14 Rue Royer-Collard, Paris 24 Mars, 1919." How he began is worth quoting at some length.

"For many and more or less obvious reasons I am starting this night to set down the impressions and opinions that have come to me in the course of the Great War. Historians will describe the struggle, technically and more or less partially, from the viewpoints of Belgium and Cuba, of Russia and Bulgaria. Diplomacy, economics, religion and philosophy will receive their due attention. Important persons and unimportant persons will tell their stories, or hear them told, I must tell it myself.

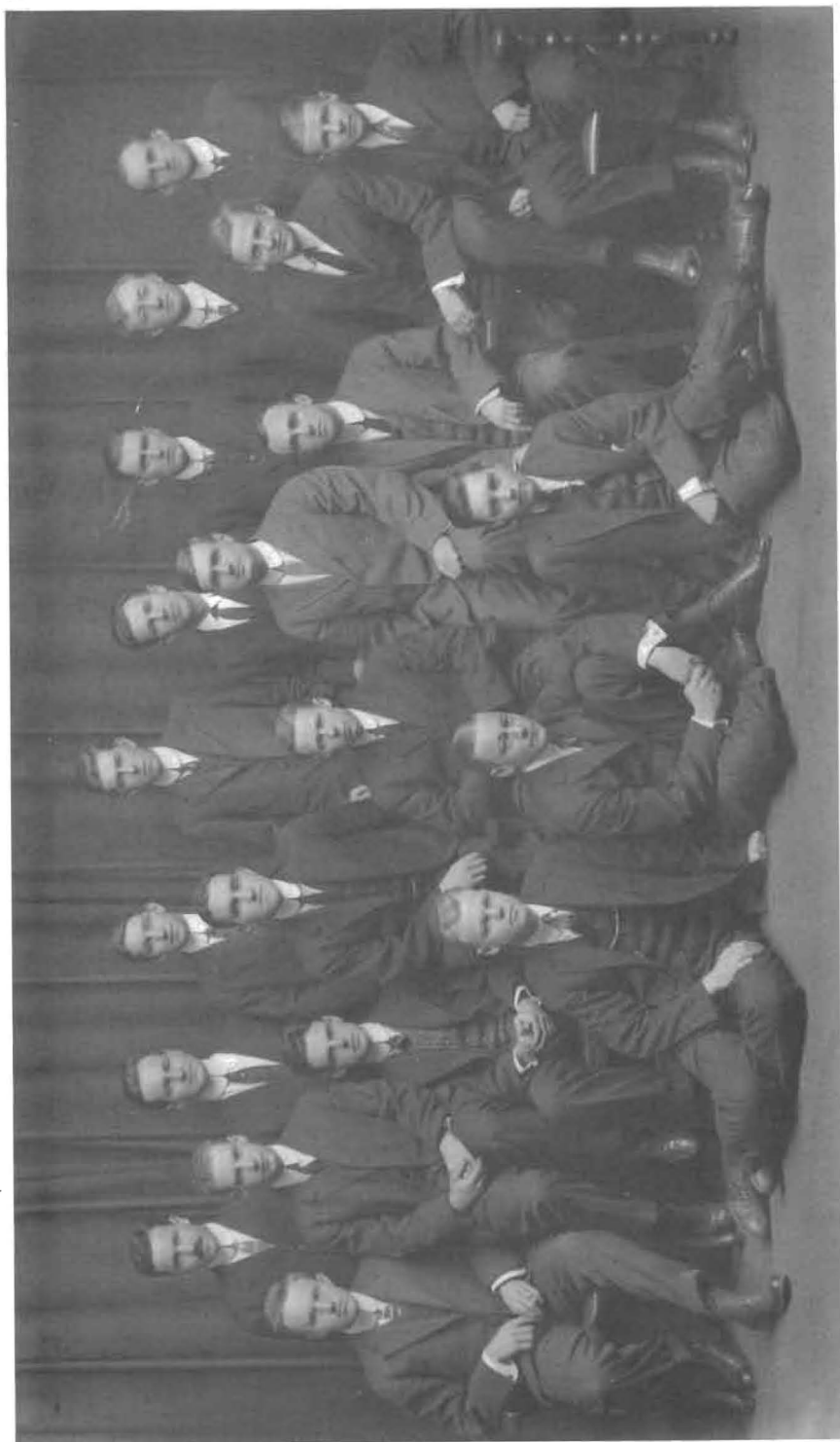
"I do not mean to imply that it is of any significance to anyone but myself. It is not. It may be typical of many others, but I do not write in a representative capacity. I consider it something purely personal. Of this much I am sure—it is to me the great romance, the great wandering forth to adventure of uncertain outcome. Whatever else life can bring to me, it can never again call forth impressions so vivid.

"As I write, the war seems to be done, and while we await peace and before these impressions fade, I set them down—if for no other reason at least to check myself against the elaboration and exaggeration to which soldiers in their later years are said to be prone.

"Besides, there is a more pressing reason. It is cold and drizzling tonight. The library is closed and I've no books to read. For two weeks or more I've been broke, too broke to buy a newspaper or a beer, or a theater ticket. I don't want to go out to ramble, but my room is very cold and I cannot buy a fire.

"I'm not given, however, to taking my misfortune very seriously, so this is my remedy: I crawl into bed, prop myself with pillows, don my bathrobe, light my faithful pipe, put on my gloves to keep my hands un-numbed, and begin to write."

The account describes classes at Yale in the spring of 1914, when Clement was finishing his junior year, under respected professors who outlined the historical and economic conditions they said might bring on a major conflict. The student found the opinions interesting but did not see them as predictions of immediate consequences.



These are some Yale classmates of John Clement. John is in the front row (seated on the floor) at left. Several others are mentioned in his notebooks, either as expressing opinions about the war, or as having adventures in Europe when the war broke out.

In 1914, "at the close of the college year I went home to Rutland to spend the summer. Clem Ripley, Joe Blake and Ollie McKee [the first a cousin and the other two college friends] sailed for France, the former to remain in Provence, the two latter to wander up and down the Alps. Yale won the boat race [with Harvard] by four inches and the news was sent to them by wireless, as they crossed the water.

"That news seemed much more important to me than the report of about the same time, that the Austrian Crown Prince had been assassinated. Assassinations had occurred before, especially in the Austrian royal house. Even Anton, our Croatian servant, saw nothing significant in it."

Though there was diplomatic excitement, Clement continued: "I shared the general attitude that, though there was danger, war was an impossibility. A local disturbance at most."

The escalation of events shocked the Clement family and excited the nation. But Clement wrote: "It has ever since that week seemed peculiar to me that no one of my friends, no one of the people with whom I came in contact, and none of the newspapers great or little, considered it the duty of the United States to act. They could not see that any action was logical or desirable."

From the perspective of five years later he wrote: "In blind terror they rushed to the old idea of isolation, which was never a true idea."

By the time he returned to Yale for the start of his senior year in the fall of 1914, John Clement was a convinced supporter of the Entente cause. In his words:

"At first we thought of little but war. Clem and Joe back from Europe, the one from France and England, the other from Switzerland to Austria, to Switzerland, through Germany under arrest, down the Rhine through Holland and home through England, brought us intimate details of the first month and its stirring days. They were as thoroughly convinced of the issue—of the German wrong and the right of the Entente—as I was.

"Clem had felt the soul of France, had learned to love it. He had been at Tours, had seen and known the *poilu* [French soldiers]. He had seen the Strasbourg statue with its heavy black of 43 years at last replaced by flowers and the fair flag of France. He had seen the colors blessed at Notre Dame. He had seen England waking and struggling to create its army, and he had crossed the sea in the dark.

"Joe had seen the spirit of the German. He knew the technical details of the armies. He had been imprisoned as a spy, and had descended the Rhine in a cattle boat. Others had interesting stories. Johnston Mali was near Liege and heard the first guns of the war. Very rare were the friends of Germany."

However:

"Maurice [last name not given] and Rip Cutler were incorrigible pacifists, and could not see that we should help to right the wrong by force, though they deplored the war and agreed that Germany was wrong. Rip entered the ambulance service in France in 1916, was wounded and won the Croix de Guerre. Maurice entered the Navy.

"Clem, Joe, Jack Hoyt and I were agreed that we ought to enter at once."

Clement and his closest friends agreed with Theodore Roosevelt that the United States should take drastic action, and deplored the fact that little of a constructive nature seemed to be taking place.

Then in May of 1915 the British liner *Lusitania* was sunk by submarine with many American citizens aboard. Clement wrote:

"I remember that night as if it were last night—the first news whispered on the campus and in the oval, the bulletins and then the newspaper "extras." I went up to see Joe and Clem and Jack and Maurice. I found Jack pacing the floor like a caged lion, nervously muttering oaths through his clenched teeth. No one wanted to talk. It was too horrible."

After graduation in the summer of 1915, Clement returned in the fall of that year to study law at Yale. That college, like others, had begun what later became ROTC units, and Yale had four artillery batteries, one of which Clement joined and became a corporal. When trouble with Mexico broke out in the summer of 1916, the military training increased, but Clement's unit did not get assigned to Mexico.

Finally, in the spring of 1917, the U.S. declared war on Germany and Austria, and the military call-ups began. Clement and his Yale friends applied for officer training camps:

"Joe was sent to Niagara, Jack Hoyt to the Presidio [in San Francisco], Cleve Frost to Benjamin Harrison [in Indiana], and I to Plattsburgh. Clem was in the Army and Maurice in the Naval Reserve. Rip Cutler was overseas with the ambulance service. This was a bigger and wider event, and it scattered us far and wide."

The next entry in the notebook deserves extensive quotation because it illustrates that Clement was not just someone who liked good living, but someone with a keen eye for whatever landscape he happened to be viewing. This was in the summer of 1917:

"I took leave of the law school and went home for a few days. Then one night, after playing bridge with Father and Grandfather till 2 a.m., I said goodbye and took the train north. I left Rutland a civilian, to begin a new life as a soldier."

"It was a weary ride in a day coach, for an hour or so, till dawn. And that dawn marked more than a new day for me, for thousands like me, for our military policy, for the nation and even for the world."

"Rosy-fingered dawn began to tint the heavens above the majestic dark silhouette of the Green Mountains. I watched the play of faint green and blushing yellows, as they sharpened the keen line of Camel's Hump and the other companions of the great ridge. And then I turned toward the west. The broad valley was still dark, and the great lake lay with its surface like foaming sapphire in the black pocket of the mountains."

"But high above, the noble summits of the Adirondacks gleamed in the light like mother-of-pearl and alabaster. The sky flashed with crimson and bright orange, chasing away the purples of the night, then paled in soft rose, green, and yellow, with distant tinges of violet. Far out the water began to gleam, and then the sun leaped above the east, and it was day."

This acutely descriptive passage is followed by a typical Clement observation: "I remember how long I had to wait for breakfast ..."

But he finally took a boat across the lake to Plattsburgh, where the War Department had put together a very roughly furnished camp to train officers. He found the training rigorous in working hard for a commission "but there was one good friend, Freddy, my cousin [Frederic Percival Clement]. He had come up from Harvard and happened to be assigned to the same company."

After a month of “basic” training the new soldiers were assigned to specific branches. Clement wrote: “To my great delight I was put in the first battery of artillery. Freddy had preferred to remain in the infantry but after a few weeks he left Plattsburgh for an aviation school.”

On Aug. 14, 1917, John Clement was commissioned a second lieutenant, and took the train to Rutland feeling quite satisfied with himself. But then he experienced the first personal shock of wartime. A cousin had died in a Marine camp.



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(l) Tom Dorr [Thomas Ripley Dorr] stands in the garden at “The Maples”, the Dorr mansion on Dorr Drive in Rutland. He was the first of John Clement’s close cousins to die in World War I. (r) Frederic Percival Clement, Jr., a cousin to whom John Clement was greatly attached, joined the Army Air Corps and was killed in a plane crash while in an air exhibition in Texas.

“As I drew near to Rutland on the train I learned from Billy Ripley of the death of Tom Dorr. He was my first dear friend to die in the service of the country in the course of the Great War. As long as I can remember he had been my constant companion, my best friend in Rutland. With him I had lived, walked, talked, read, slept, camped, gone to school. With him I had begun to love much that I hold highest and dearest in life.

“He was one of those rare friends with whom mutual understanding is instinctive, needing no words. He had suffered terribly from sickness and nervousness and he had won his fight with it all. He developed into a man of lovable character, high-principled, unselfish, high-minded, with a sort of religious enthusiasm that is very rare. He was passionately fond of literature and had demonstrated the elements of his ability as a writer. He became greatly interested in the work of social betterment, and intended to make that the work of his life.

"I can see him now, in our camp in the Lower Grove at Clementwood, or in the garden of "The Maples" [the Dorr mansion on Dorr Drive]. I can see him blowing up woodchuck holes with powder. I remember the day when he burned his face terribly with powder, and we took him to the house in agony.

"I can hear him reading, in that fine expressive voice, the tales of Rowland Robinson, as we sat in the lamplight in "The Maples," Aunt Julia, Tom and I. I can see him leading the way to, through and beyond the three great mysterious forests of our boyhood on the Quarterline, that old and beautiful sky-touching road which led by old Dick Sharp's house, through the woods, over the hilltop, even to Chippenhook and on and on forever into the great unknown. I can see him and hear him as he urged old Columbus into a mad gallop down the valley as we returned from a fruitless but fascinating hunt for crystals on the Dorr farm at Birdseye.

"Again I can see his panic-stricken face, with something of the terror of a newly captured bird caged far from his beloved haunts, as he came in from a long struggle with his homesickness and loneliness at Exeter, his first isolation from home.

"A year with him there and then we saw each other more rarely at our different schools and colleges. But it was always good to see him, and to talk with him again.

"I went to Williamstown to his funeral in the stately Williams College chapel, a sad and nobly simple tribute to him and to his sacrifice. He was far from being a military man, but he was a soldier in the very highest sense.

"At Rutland he was buried beside his father and his father's father. As the sun sank, glorious behind the dear green hills, striking golden rays into the throng beside the grave, the last volley was fired, and 'Taps' sounded clear, simple, serene, echoing among the tombs and the stones, and finally sinking into the soft murmur of the pines.

"As the mourners withdrew slowly, the old washwoman of 'The Maples' went weeping to the edge of the grave."

After a few days of repose and recollection Clement took the train to Fort Devens in Ayer, Mass., to take up an officer's duties. Though in the artillery and hoping for a place on the firing line, he found himself assigned, rather against his will, to a supply company. His comment: "Such is the Army."

There was much paper-work, and many organizational chores, for the officers to get ready for the first draftees, who arrived in September. The new lieutenant found: "They looked for advice and instruction, not merely along military lines but in even their personal affairs. They brought to me their troubles in the company and their troubles and even their joys at home, and often I found I could give them help. I came to know the history of almost every man."

Finally, in mid-July 1918, the troop commander cautioned all the officers to great secrecy and told them to get ready to take trains to Boston harbor, where they would board a troop ship. They boarded silently, but when the ship went out into the harbor all the other ships blew their whistles and there was great cheering and band-playing on the shore. "This was the secrecy of departure," Clement noted drily.

Nevertheless they were on their way, and he recalled a sense of exaltation at the prospect:

"We were at last on our way, crusaders in the Great War. Of course there were perhaps 300,000 others sailing in that single month, but we were sailing, and to us it had a tremendous personal importance. We were our own symbols of the great effort of America. We were marking a tremendous epoch in history. After centuries of isolation from Europe, politically, during which we were constantly drawing from Europe its peoples, its customs, we at last were quitting our own shores to go to the help of our motherland and erstwhile enemy, our brotherland and longtime friend.

"They built wiser than they knew, those who made the Statue of Liberty face toward the Old World.

"From the scene of the tea-party, the massacre, the Bunker Hill, from the rolling fields and woods of Lexington and Concord, we were sailing under the command of a British officer, under the flag of England, to England.

"Astern our homes and all they held, pricelessly dear. Our homes and our native hills, so stern, so gentle, so serene. Ahead our ambitions, our hopes, our fears, our enemies and our allies. The New World was sailing forth in all its mighty youth to help the Old World in its struggle ...On our ship there were men who might be called the pick of America, the finest of the old and sturdy stock which came from England and created a great free nation. There were men from the stock of Scotland and Ireland, men of the stock of Germany rejoicing in their new land and proud to oppose the wrongs of their old land, men of France, of Italy, of Greece, of Russia and Poland the oppressed, of all the races of Austria-Hungary."

The ship carrying Clement's contingent was the *Novara*, from a British East Indian line staffed by a crew from India. After the excitement and exaltation of the departure from Boston it was somewhat of an anti-climax to be unloaded at Halifax, Nova Scotia, to wait for a new convoy. "There were too many troop ships for the convoy, and no freight ships to act as outside or buffer ships [against submarines] so the *Novara* was taken, empty, for that purpose."

But they made the best of their unexpected stay, mingling with a host of other Allied soldiers waiting for the same new convoy. There were concerts, sports and dances. Clement wrote:

"One dance was ever after notable in the history of the regiment for the presence of the movie queen, Doris Kenyon. Everyone fell in love with her at sight. Some of our staid old married captains startled us by nearly coming to blows in their eagerness to dance with her."

Finally a new convoy was ready, and Clement's contingent boarded the *Abinsi*, of a West African line, comparatively new and never before used for troops. The crossing had all the now-familiar precautions against submarines—blackouts, zig-zag formations and constant watches.

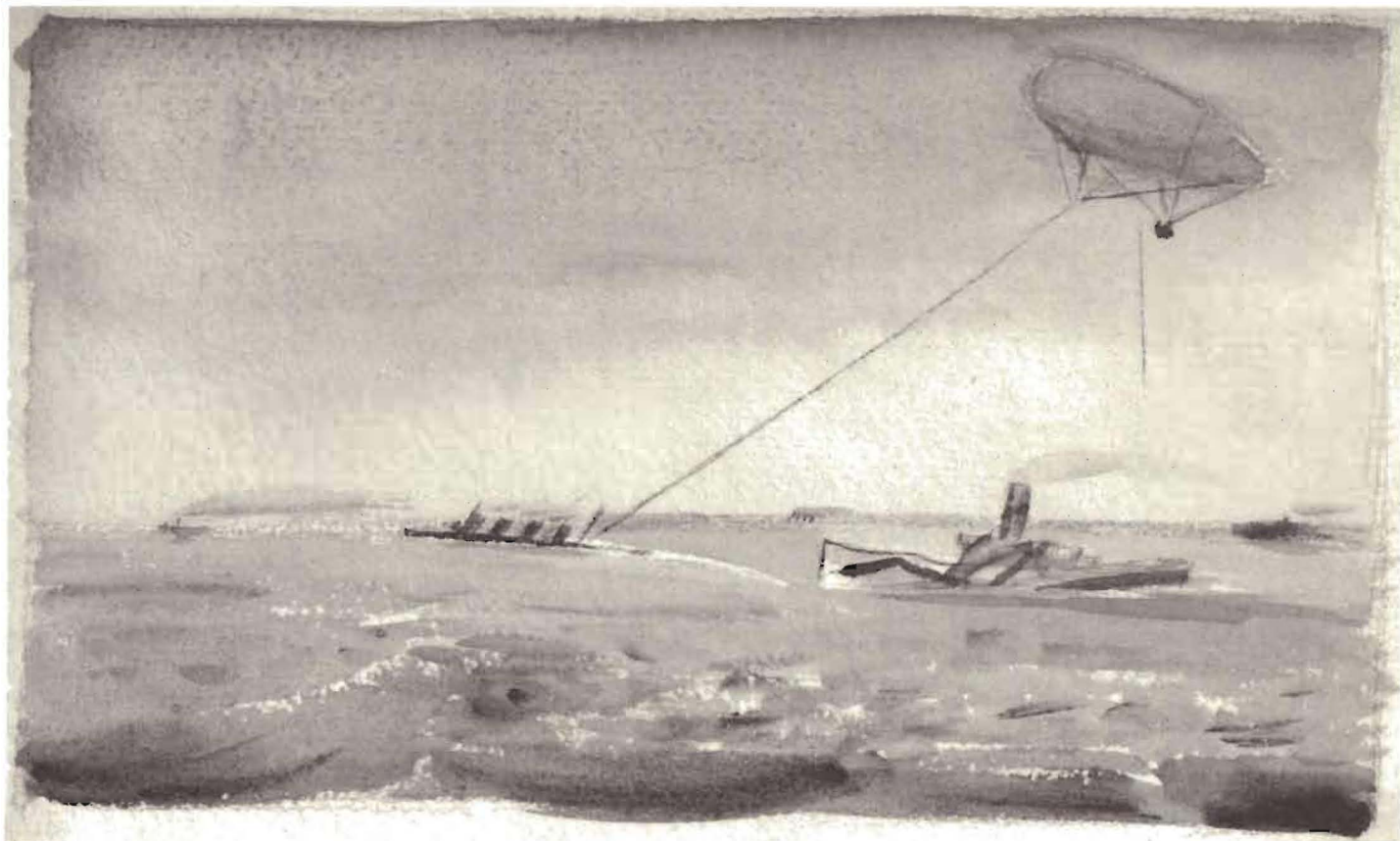
Though the 12-day trip saw no submarines, there was excitement of a sort:

"Once in a heavy fog our ship was almost rammed by another and later, when as a precaution we had increased our intervals, our ship and three others became lost from the convoy. Toward evening of the next day we found the convoy, and were welcomed back with a string of signal flags which must have been highly insulting, for our captain cursed like a true seaman when he read them."

As they neared the British coast warships of all kinds increased, as well as aircraft which included blimps as well as airplanes.



A night view of the darkened convoy as it crossed the Atlantic was painted by Clement, probably from memory.



A Clement sketch of the convoy as it approached the English coast shows a dirigible that at that time was acting not so much as air defense, but as a submarine spotter.

There was a heavy fog, but: "And then almost beside us the grey-white chalk cliffs of Dover loomed up through the fog. It was our first real sight of solid land, and had I known nothing of our destination I could not have mistaken it."

Their destination turned out to be London, and as they sailed up the Thames they were cheered by crowds on the shore. Clement noted that the people were almost entirely women and small children, with only occasionally a very old man. Many of the women were dressed as factory workers.

After docking in London the contingent went by train to the vicinity of Southampton, where they camped to await ships to take them across the channel. While waiting they visited homes in the area. Clement inspected a country church where the guest book contained a page across which was scrawled "Wilhelm II." The Kaiser, of course, as a grandson of Queen Victoria, had visited often in Britain.

Clement was in a party that visited Stonehenge: "We took a motor to go out over the downs to Stonehenge. Enormous military camps and great hangars, British and American, were on every side, and above us innumerable planes roared through the blue air. In the midst of such surroundings stood the ancient temple of the sun, with its circle of massive stones, telling the story of dead ages. Returning, we passed the Roman ruins of Old Sarum, though that is modern after Stonehenge. To wait for our train we sat on the lawn of the cathedral close, enjoying the calm of the late afternoon, and that most peaceful and serene spot, where the long shadows of the cathedral and the trees stretched across the green."

Eventually they were marched to Southampton and boarded ships which also contained troops from all parts of the empire, returning from leave or hospitals.

On his ship, Clement wrote; "I was the senior American officer and reported to the senior British officer, who read me the usual instructions—life-preservers worn at all times, no lights, no smoking, no liquor—and then offered me some whiskey."

When they reached the French coast near LeHavre they had to wait for a turn of the tide to take them into the docks. "Meanwhile my new friends from England, South Africa, New Zealand or Australia told me stories of the war and their own experiences."

After a night at a crowded camp near LeHavre Clement went with a fellow-officer, "Pete" Peterson to secure travel rations for his troops and to load them in preparation for their journey.

"Then, with Pete, I went into the town to secure drinkables for our voyage, and realized for the first time that a musette bag is built on just the right lines to accommodate several bottles."

As the train moved slowly, without lights, through the darkened countryside of Normandy, Clement came as close as he ever did to actual combat.

"Suddenly there was a flash like lightning, and a terrific explosion very near to us. The sleepers awoke and we all rushed to the windows looking out and up. The Boches were bombing the railroad and apparently trying for our train. Searchlights were madly prying into the clouds, and eventually seemed to focus almost over our heads. Quite near us a battery of anti-aircraft guns opened fire, and we watched the bursts just over our train. Machine-guns spat and stammered with their staccato crackling. More bombs fell, with a deafening crack and thun-

der echoing from the hillsides. It was like a violent and spectacular display of fireworks, tremendously interesting.

"Our train showed a prodigious burst of speed and dragged a very reluctant load of spectators into another long dark tunnel. We pulled in our heads and straightened our cramped bodies. Of course we were all thrilled by our first contact with the enemy. It was altogether too exciting and too brief to give us any thought of danger—if there was any.

"With our first relaxation the chaplain, with his usual keen instinct, announced that it was time for another bottle of champagne with which to celebrate the battle. We found a bottle and our cups—pop! and the foaming juice was downed."

Thinking back on their long wait in that tunnel until the attack was finally over, Clement reflected: "Waiting—waiting—that is the real horror of war. We had been waiting long years before entering the war. We had waited 10 long months at Devens to cross. We waited in Nova Scotia and again in England, pleasantly and hospitably to be sure, but impatiently, for we had one goal—action."

The train eventually reached LeMans, and in that vicinity Clement described another of his impressions of the countryside. He made a sketch of it. He was writing the description nearly a year later, but whether he made the sketch on the spot so it could refresh his memory, or whether he did both writing and sketch from memory, cannot be known. To the end of his life he retained a keen sense of recollection of events and detail. In any event:

"As the sun sank beyond the blue hills we crossed the Loire at Saumur, and there was a spectacle which in one or two minutes was indelibly graven on my mind forever. High on the hillside overlooking and dominating the broad slow river stood the chateau of dreams and fables, a vast mass of walls and towers, of steep roofs and chimneys, every detail silhouetted sharply against a golden sky. Far in the distance lay the low hills and below us, reaching toward them, a river of pure gold, blinding the eye with its fierce reflection of the sunset—with broad streaks of dead black, the sandbars.

"It was almost the type of the rich glory of old royal France. The chateau was deserted, its windows broken, but the gorgeous majesty, the splendor of color, was flashed back as from the days of Francois, Henri, and the grand Louis."

The train was taking them to staging quarters near Bordeaux in the south of France, and along the way there was that mix of optical and gustatory observation that was so typical of Clement all his life:

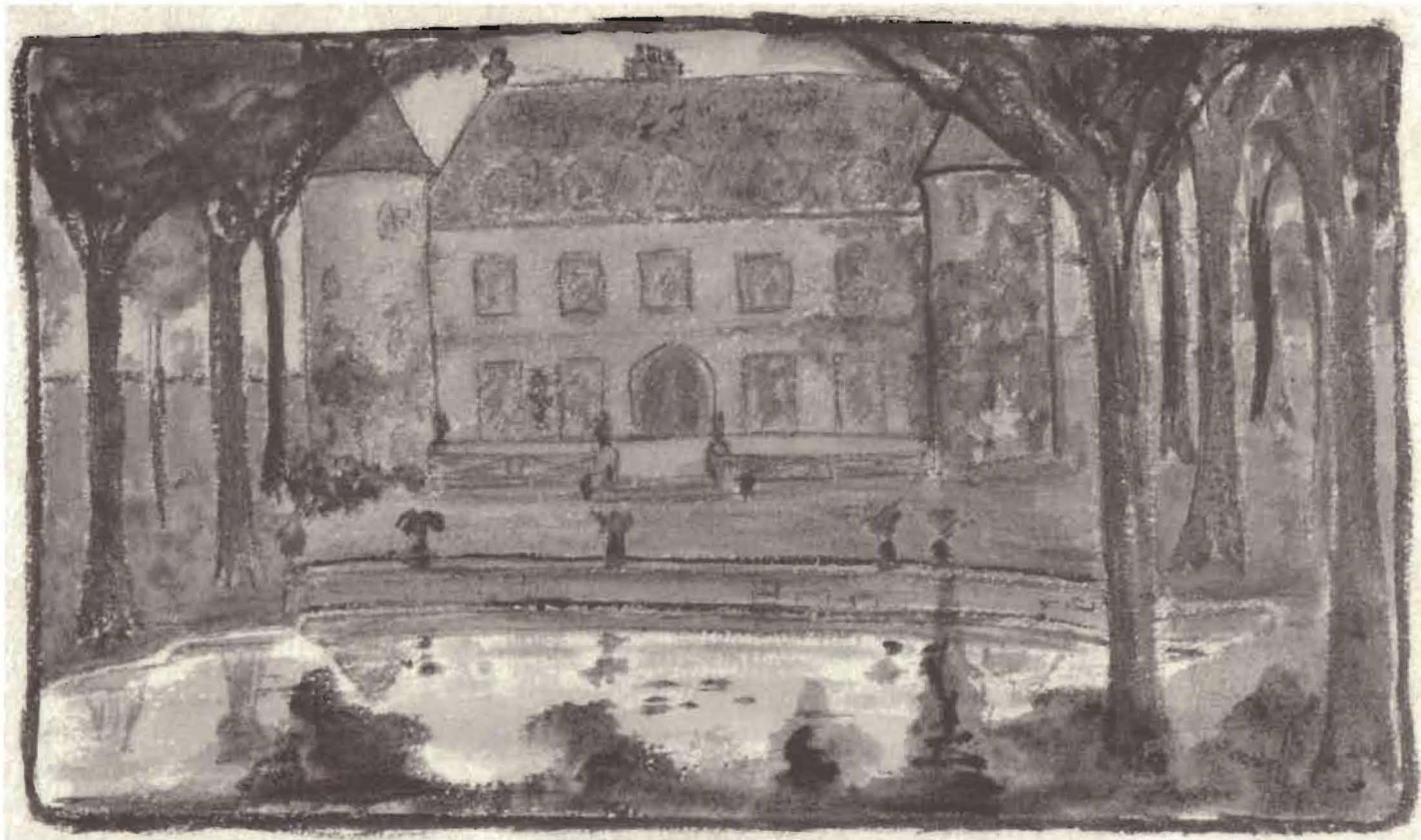
"In the morning we found ourselves in a new country, with the flavor of the south—long, low whitewashed buildings with red-tiled roofs, ancient high-wheeled carts drawn by oxen or mules, dark-skinned and dark-haired inhabitants who revelled in bright color. At Jourac we found a charming little inn with delicious coffee with the cognac of the region.

"On again through the fascinating Midi, we saw old walls and ruined towers, and great vineyards reaching out for miles fairly drinking in the oppressive sun. There was no trace of war, save in the absence of the young men."

In the village of Gradignan not far from Bordeaux Clement was billeted with Peterson in a chateau that had been built about 150 years before out of an old priory. He was there long enough to make two sketches of it. The owner-occupants



Near LeMans on the Loire in France, the ruins of this castle, set against the background of the river and the sky, impressed Clement with their reflection of history.



Clement made a couple of sketches of this chateau near Bordeaux. He and another officer were quartered there while they trained in the south of France. He found the owner-occupants correct but not friendly, since they did not appreciate having strange troops quartered on their property.

were a couple who were friendly but formal. But they had two small children who were more lively.

"My first night in Gradignan Pete and I took supper in a little cafe, 'du Souire,' where we sat under the trees in the moonlight. Like most others in the regiment—and probably in the Army—after our long siege of prohibition in America we drank, that first night, white wine like beer, and succeeded so well with the unlimited supply that we lost not only the wine but our supper, too. And from this we, like all the rest, found certain definite conclusions: It is impossible to drink all the wine in France in one sitting. No matter how much one drinks there is always plenty left for the morrow. The gentlest of white wines has a decided kick if taken too abundantly."

It was while at Gradignan that Clement had one of those "personal" experiences he mentioned in his foreword. He met a single girl casually in a cafe, invited her to dinner and the theater a couple of nights later, found her very good-looking and a good conversationalist. After the theater he escorted her to her apartment. She invited him in, poured some red wine, started to kiss him and invited him to spend the night. He declined and made a rather awkward exit. Discussing it later he was told that, since she had not asked for money, it was probably just a case of a girl free from parental control who had taken a shine to him.

Clement commented: "I think that must be the explanation. Here in France, it may be a perfectly reasonable one. In America, under almost similar conditions, it would be preposterous."

The only woman in France with whom Clement seems to have had a long-standing personal acquaintance is someone he refers to a couple of times as "Germaine." There is no further identification or description.

In addition to the irregularity of incoming mail from home, Clement and the other officers found the difficulty of being responsible for seeing that when the soldiers wrote home they didn't give away any security secrets.

They wrote voluminously, hoping for letters from home: "At first it was somewhat interesting to read their letters, but it grew terribly boring. I never realized how similarly a group of men could think and write. Letter after letter contained precisely the same thought, expressed in precisely the same characterless words. Most of them were exceedingly stupid but nearly all, sometimes, would give some slight expression of individuality."

The pleasant living conditions ended when the artillery forces were ordered to an artillery training camp at Camp LeSouge, further inland. Clement was in the advance party: "I passed through the gate, above which perched the chancicler of France, into the most desolate place I have ever seen. The buildings, long low structures of wood and tile, lined the battered bumpy road. Beyond them, between them, everywhere, was a desert of sand."

While the regiment was absorbed in artillery drill, Clement spent a good deal of time with a crew of men going back and forth to Bordeaux to pick up supplies. He became very adept at persuading harried dock foremen or derrick operators to unload specific things for him.

But there was also a grim side:

"One very terrible event was the outbreak of Spanish flu. Our regiment and all the others were promptly quarantined. The hospital was crowded, like all others in the vicinity. There were deaths by the dozen every day.

"In the supply company we lost one man, Constant Emerson, a tall and sturdy Vermonter. One dismal rainy day we went out to bury him. In a small shed serving as a morgue there were six or eight bare wooden caskets containing the victims of the previous day. After an interminable delay, two large trucks appeared, and were loaded with the flag-draped caskets, and the long sad procession started through the drizzle and heavy mud ... We reached the white fenced enclosure in the pines.

"Our band then played Chopin's march, which never before had such dignity and lofty immortality. The caskets were carried to their graves, and three or four chaplains read funeral services. In the distance was the faint homely tinkle of cowbells, ringing clear and fresh through the dripping pines. Leaning over the fence were two French women, one an old mother, the other a widow, both dressed in black—women who had lost those they loved in the Great War, weeping silently now for the mothers and widows who at the moment, unknowingly, were making their supreme sacrifice."

He continued: "To see a fellow Vermonter buried there under the pines was to carry me back to Vermont, to his family there, and to the first war funeral I had seen there under the pines, and to the others I had not seen."

In addition to his cousin Tom Dorr, whose life and funeral he had described so eloquently, Clement lost his cousin "Freddy" Clement, who had joined the Air Corps and had been killed when his plane crashed during a July 4th air show in Texas. Clement heard about the tragedy after he had reached France.

When the epidemic had abated the regiment received orders to report for assignment to the front lines. This was Clement's description of the start:

"Our train was loaded during the night and started about 2 a.m. We had plenty of box-cars but only one small compartment car. So we officers spread out our bedding rolls in a box-car, and enjoyed almost the comforts of a wagon-lit, even to the mattress and clean sheets. Our food was the travel ration of bread, canned willy [some kind of meat], goldfish, jam, tomatoes. And we augmented it with pate de foie gras, and other delicious things."

The group finally, after delays amounting to 60 hours, reached Rimancourt near the headquarters of the American Expeditionary Force. Clement wrote: "Bill Foote and I, with a detachment to handle supplies, were left at Rimancourt. Bill and I lived in the very large bedroom of a very small house, which was kept marvelously clean, though the surroundings were chiefly pig-pens and manure piles, and mud."

A few days later:

"I was ordered to take a detachment to Dijon, to get motorcycles and trucks. In the morning of that day I went out in one of the narrow village streets. An old man came up wreathed with smiles, declaring: 'C'est fini, la guerre, ce matin a onze heures.' And so it was. I went to the village headquarters and there found a wireless message just arrived, ordering all hostilities suspended at eleven in the morning of the eleventh of November. Of course we had followed the negotiations, and had hoped we might reach the front before the end came. But now it had come, with a sort of shock. It hadn't seemed really possible."

While waiting for a train to take him to Dijon, Clement celebrated at a supper buffet with four old Frenchmen, and then waited on the long platform of the railroad station.

"I stalked up and down the platform in the cold damp night, waiting. Presently a long train of splendid first-class coaches drew in. The MPs and gendarmes grew thick and hustled everyone off the platform except American officers. Colonels and other high officers began to arrive. I talked to one of them who wore a tell-tale black stripe on his cuff and, as we watched a couple of squealing pigs in a crate, I asked him what the terms of the armistice were, and he told me that Clemenceau was announcing them in Paris that day, but that he could not tell me then. Merely that they were very severe.

"Suddenly officers and MPs rushed toward a passage and formed a line leading toward the train. I rushed too, and took a place in the line. At the other end of the passage a limousine stopped. A tall grim figure descended. Everyone snapped to attention. Every hand came to salute. Down the passage came General Pershing. As he approached the aisle of saluting officers he brought up his hand, and held his returning salute till he boarded the train. He seemed very tall, a figure of grey-blue spring steel, stern, clear-cut, vigorous, eyes like cold hard gleaming gems, square set jaw, erect — the typification of the relentless military genius. That day had ended his task."

In Dijon the Americans found wild celebration. "My men and I, with our packs and mud, were hailed as conquering heroes. The streets were swarming with cheering and marching crowds. But the night was the time for the real celebration. Though it was the 12th, the enthusiasm had not waned. I have never seen anything like it, under any circumstances, and as circumstances go, those will never again be equalled. Since the victories of Napoleon, France had had no great victories. For almost 50 years since 1870, it had undergone the humiliation of bitter defeat ...

"Soldiers of France, of Italy, of England, Russia, Belgium and America were there. Old men and young boys, old women, young women and children, even babies were there ... The cafes were crowded with the jubilant who took advantage of the decree of a wise mayor that they should stay open all night. Yet I saw only one person drunk, and he of course was an American."

After securing the vehicles for his detachment, the lieutenant and his men rode through some spectacular Burgundian countryside to where their regiment waited. Ultimately they reached Brest and the ships to take them home, but at that point Clement asked for, and received, permission to remain in France. While awaiting definite confirmation of such orders, Clement was an officer in a camp kitchen where he was impressed by the efficiency of being able to feed thousands of men at a meal without long delays. He noted: "The worst feature was the weather. There was a fine persistent rain and a cold which rarely reached the freezing point but was seldom far above it ... Our lives were saved by the fact that we could get in Brest plenty of Jamaica rum which, mixed with melted lemon drops and hot water, made a pleasant and invigorating drink."

Genial, easy-going and able to make friends easily, John Clement had little use for arbitrary authoritarianism, which he called "Prussianism." He endured hectoring from time to time by his superior officers in the Army, but his notebooks make very plain how much he disliked such actions. His notebooks also show that he was very much in tune with the climate of opinion among the Allies at the end of the war, when the antipathy against Germany and Germans, bred by years of



Clement found this country road typical of the landscape in central France as he travelled through it on the way to the front lines. This and other paintings of French scenes are included in his notebooks.

combat, led to the belief that a defeated Germany was capable of bringing its "Prussianism" even to the peace table. The uncertainty in the months between the Armistice and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles added to this belief.

While he was writing his journal in Paris, Clement interrupted the sequence of his narrative a couple of times to comment on events of the peace negotiations and the ceremonies of remembrance. His comments about what was likely to happen show remarkable foresight for one being so close to events.

"As I write it is 17:40 o'clock on the twenty-third day of June 1919. In one hour and 20 minutes the time will have elapsed in which the enemy can choose peace or war. I think they will sign. I fear they will sign. They have just demonstrated, by sinking their fleet at Scapa Flow and perhaps what remains at Kiel, that they cannot be trusted ...

"Two days ago I was at Versailles. The great iron grills were being re-gilded. The Salle des Glaces and all the center of that golden palace were closed for decoration and arrangement. In the enormous courtyard, soldiers were busily removing the masses of captured German cannon ...If they sign at a great ceremony in the hall from which was proclaimed the monstrous German Empire—peace, and years of effort to force the Germans to live up to the terms which they sign, years of effort to overcome countless new treacheries in every way and in every land."

The other ceremony had a more poignant personal implication for John Clement, who had lost two close cousins and a very close Yale friend since they had all enlisted. This passage deserves to be repeated in full:

"Today, the tenth of April 1919, the doors of the Pantheon were open. I entered and found myself at a service of homage to the French men of letters who had given their lives in the war.

"Far at the end, beneath the statue of the Convention, gleamed the plumes and helmets of the Garde Republicaine. Their trumpets rang clear and shrill, in that vast arched building which, though crowded, seemed empty. Beneath the great dome was a huge casket draped with the flag of France.

"A general of the Army of France arose, keen, vigorous and thoughtful. He turned to give a sharp full-toned command, and the trumpets blared. Then perfect silence while he placed on the casket a single bronze palm. Turning toward the throng he read in clear distinct words the names of 450 French men of letters morts pour la patrie. To those names he seemed to give with his vibrant voice something of the immortality, the gratitude, which the great building seems to typify in spirit.

"The names echoed around the dome and through the arches till they seemed to become a very part of that place which holds the remains of so many of the great men of France, dedicated 'aux grands hommes la patrie reconnaissante.'

"Almost subconsciously I repeated to myself the names of three I loved, and lost in the war—

"Frederic Percival Clement

"Thomas Ripley Dorr

"Cleveland Cady Frost

that their names might, too, mingle with the echoes here on the summit of the Montagne Sainte-Genevieve, beside the Seine."



Clement sketched the scene of the Paris location where a memorial was held for the literary people of France who had died in the Great War. Clement whispered the names of three of his friends who had died in the military.

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